

Comparability - Guidance, Quality Assurance, and Data Management

What is it?

To get the most out of its limited resources, SWAMP has focused its initial program efforts on developing program guidance (namely procedures, tools, and guidelines) that monitoring entities can use to ensure their monitoring project design produces data that are SWAMP comparable. Examples of SWAMP Guidance include the Comparability Fact Sheet, the SWAMP Quality Assurance Program Plan, the QAPP Advisor Tool, the Algae Standard Operating Procedures, and the Bioassessment Quality Assurance Program Plan. Examples of data management comparability and coordination include online data sheets, templates, and documentation for data submission, Online Data Checker, and a much enhanced Data Management and Quality Assurance Team Website. The SWAMP Help Desk provides live information and answers questions on SWAMP comparability.

Why is it important to the State?

In the past, money was invested in projects that generated valuable data and resulted in a tremendous increase in knowledge about ambient water quality. However, these projects lacked coordination and consistency, thereby making it difficult to systematically summarize across projects. A first step in addressing this oversight is to establish basic guidance and monitoring data quality objectives.

Why is it important to me?

Water is precious to all Californians. Its value is directly related to its quality. Every year, hundreds of decisions are made that influence our water quality. These decisions range from local development decisions to statewide policy implementation. The high quality data that SWAMP collects and manages provides information that can be used to help answer the questions:

- How well are we managing California's precious resource – water?

- Are we protecting the beneficial uses of our water – namely, is the water safe for me to swim in, is the fish caught in it healthy so that I may eat it, is the overall ecosystem healthy?
- Are we investing our limited state resources effectively and focusing them on the right water quality problems.

Better coordination between projects and agreement on basic approaches and on data and measurement quality objectives means funds will be spent effectively and efficiently.

How will this information be used?

These “tools” will be used by other state, federal, and local agencies as well as monitoring groups who conduct ambient water quality monitoring in California. The use of these tools ensures comparability of data.

